1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

the water. On each side of each torch-bearer goes a man armed with bow and arrows; for small fish the arrows have heads like the handles of spoons, but for large fish they use arrows with heads with only one wing and barb, like an ordinary arrow-head bisected from point to shank. The torch-bearers and bowmen wade up against the current, and the fish, which at night are feeding in these shallows and not in the deep pools, are attracted or stupefied by the glare and are easily shot with the arrows or caught in the baskets.'

E. Intoxicants and Other Drinks

The commonest intoxicant in the Abujhmar hills is the fermented juice of the sago-palm (*Caryota urens*), and the tree is common also in many parts of the Bison-horn Maria country. It is now propagated freely by Hill and Bison-horn Marias. The tree, unlike the toddy-palm, is monoecious. The flowering peduncles, which appear like thin elephant trunks, have their ends cut off before they flower, and act as taps, bamboo tubes being fastened below the cut to catch the sap; the Bison-horn Marias often use earthenware pots. The tubes are emptied in the morning and evening, bamboo poles still retaining the stumps of side-shoots being tied on to the trees as rough ladders. When fresh, the sap is not intoxicating and has a pleasant dry taste, not unlike champagne. After two or three years' tapping the tree dies, when the inner tissue of the stem yields the starchy food substance already mentioned. If the ends of the peduncle get worm- or grub-eaten before they are tapped, it is considered a sure sign of witchcraft, and more than one murder has been recorded on this account. The bottom of the trunk of the dead tree is commonly used as the hollow body of the Hill Maria single-membrane *turam* or kettle-drums.

Sago-palm

The toddy-palm (*Borassus flabellifer*) is not grown or tapped in the Abujhmar hills, but is common in the south of the Bison-horn country especially among the so-called Koyas and the Dorlas, and in Sukma and Konta. In this teluguized region whole villages camp-out in the toddy groves from March till June in a perpetual state of semi-intoxication, taking solid food only in the evening, and sometimes going without that for three or four days or even a week. The sap is tapped by cutting the ends of the flowering spadices, in much the same way as the sago-palm; the spadix appears in the male trees from November to March, while the female tree yields sap from April to June. The vessels used to catch the sap are generally thick bamboo tubes three or four feet long, of about three gallons capacity. Excessive tapping soon shortens the life of the trees. The juice rapidly ferments, though not intoxicating when drawn, and fermentation is expedited by the habit of mixing the fresh juice with that left

Toddy-palm

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

273 This seems to mean, 'When drunk a Gond is like the hind-quarters of a buffalo,
539 which you can cut with a knife but nothing happens. The Kalar and his wife are the thieves of the liquor-pots and so they have to beg from door to door for beef-soup.' The song reveals the usual scorn for and unpopularity of the Kalar.

276 The Muria do not approve of drugs. 'We will seduce the Kalar's daughter (mahua spirit), but we won't even look at the Raja's sister (opium).' They do not drink *gānja* or *bhāng*—'those are for the Hindus'—though Lingo is said to have distributed *gānja* to chelik and motiari in the ghotul he founded. Kotha, an old Muria of Kuntpadar, recalled what happened to him when he drank *gānja* as a chelik. 'Once as I was ploughing my field, I took off my cloth and put it under a tree, where a cow found and ate it. In the evening I felt cold and took a lot of *gānja* to warm myself. I got very drunk and shouted in the ghotul that I was going to die. That night I took several motiari and they were all angry with me. Next morning I felt very ashamed and have never taken *gānja* or even tobacco since.'

272 The Muria sometimes make what is called *surem*, a concoction of mahua flowers which have been boiled in water again and again, sometimes with slices of mango added. They occasionally tap the date palm and drink its sweet heavy juice. In the east and south of the ghotul country, they
273 occasionally make the landa rice-beer so beloved of the Bison-horn Maria.

Landa, which tastes like an imaginary mixture of dynamite and Sanatogen, is the most potent intoxicant in Bastar. It is also the most deceptive. It does not produce its effect at once. The thick tasty fluid slips down the throat, and the drinker deceives himself into thinking he is having a good meal; before he knows what has happened he is dangerously drunk, and he remains drunk for a long time. Not a few of the homicidal crimes of the Bison-horn Maria are due to or are at least occasioned by the drinking of landa.[1]

To the Hill Maria, landa is *polo*, or taboo, and the Jhoria and northern Muria under Maria influence do not make it. Its use appears to be confined to the Muria of the centre, east and south. It is made by mixing kosra or rice and mandia. The rice or kosra is first soaked in water, then dried and ground in an ordinary hand-mill. The resulting flour is mixed with hot water into a paste. A woman places a large earthenware pot full of boiling water on the fire and fixes an inverted conical basket (called the *jib*) over its mouth. She fills this with the paste and steams it for about a quarter of an hour and then puts it aside.

Previously the mandia grain has been soaked in water, set aside for two or three days till it has sprouted and then dried and ground. The woman pours some of it into a very large pot, puts the rice paste above it, and adds more mandia flour in the proportion of one part of mandia to two of rice or kosra. She then fills the pot up with cold water and puts it aside in a corner of the room. Here it stands for five or six days; when it is seen to be obviously fermenting and there is a bitter smell, they know it is ready.

The Muria do not use landa for ritual purposes; it is made by just those Muria who do not erect memorial menhirs to their dead—which is the time when the Bison-horn Maria chiefly use it ceremonially. The Muria take it at marriages and funerals; they give it to their labourers at seed-time or harvest; it is generally regarded as a sort of supplementary drink to be used when the supply of mahua spirit or salphi juice is insufficient.

[1] Elwin, *Maria Murder and Suicide*, pp. 135ff.